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ABSTRACT

In this speech, the author discusses the introduction of Doctor William Glasser's approach to humanizing education in Madison, Wisconsin, public schools and describes research conducted in a field setting to determine teacher attitudes to this new approach. Appended to the presentation is the teacher attitude survey instrument used. (Author/JF)

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Schools Without Failure
in
Madison, Wisconsin

A Case Study

Presented at the
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New Orleans, Louisiana
February 25 - March 1, 1973

by
Kenneth Jensen, Area Director
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Madison, Wisconsin is a city of over 175,000 mostly middle-class persons with a population of 32,300 students in the K-12 public school system. Home of the state government and of the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus, the city boasts few major industries and less than 1% of the population is of minority groups (Blacks, Chicanos, native Americans).

The public school system is comprised of four high schools, ten middle schools and thirty-three elementary schools. In addition, two alternative-form high schools, sometimes called free schools, serve students who seem unwilling or unable to be served by the traditional high schools. Also, within the public school system we have two experimental Montessori classroom sections and several along the lines of the British Open Primary concept.

Almost all Madison elementary schools and all middle and high schools serve students from a wide-range of socio-economic backgrounds. And like all school systems in urban areas which are fast becoming big cities, Madison has its share of educational problems.

Some of the problems identified in the fall of 1970 were:

- .Some children unable to cope with school - expressed in truancy and vandalism
- .Some children unable to cope with their teachers - expressed in disruptive and disturbing behaviors.
- .Some children unable to cope with their peers - expressed in fighting at school.
- .Some children unable to cope with the academic menu - expressed in grade failure and repeating, and
- .Some children unable to cope with themselves - surely expressed in every overt behavior previously mentioned, but also expressed by others in an autistic passivity toward the life and learning swirling about them.

It was in this context that Norman Bassett of the Bassett Foundation (a local philanthropical foundation) asked me to fly to the Educator Training Center in Los Angeles for an introduction to the Schools Without Failure concept. I went, I saw and I was convinced to the extent that upon my return to Madison I immediately requested implementation of the SWF concept in the Madison Public Schools.

Again, with support from Mr. Bassett, this was arranged, and the second semester of the 1970-71 school year saw the introduction of the SWF concept to Madison.

TRAINING

The first step taken in Madison was to obtain the commitment of teachers and administrators to the SWF concept. No one was coerced. Eleven elementary school staffs, two middle school staffs and four central office personnel volunteered to be in the first training cluster. Accordingly, thirteen principals and thirteen teachers, elected by their peers, along with the four central office persons received initial training as teacher trainers. These trainers became the local, in-school training resources for the subsequent seminar sessions, which began with 350 teachers in attendance.

The training received in the seminar followed, precisely, the prospectus and time schedule generated by the Educational Training Center of Los Angeles. And through the largess of Mr. Bassett, participants in the seminar obtained graduate credits through LaVerne College in California.

Each of the fifteen two-hour seminar sessions was evaluated separately. Put together, the data showed a fairly complete picture of how the teachers perceived their training.

This cycle was repeated in the first and second semesters of 1971-72 and the first semester of 1972-73. In 1972-73 the Educational Training Center identified a resource person in the Madison Schools to be their permanent on-site staff member - and so the Madison Schools have become a satellite training center for the dissemination of the SWF concept in the midwest region of the country.

THE SWF CONCEPT IN MADISON

To date, a total of 700 professionals in the Madison Public Schools have been trained in the SWF concept and another 300 teachers new to the system (Madison's annual turnover is about 8% even with the teacher surplus) are being trained this current semester.

And what were all of these people taught? Fundamentally, they were taught techniques for doing those things they have always claimed to be doing:

1. Class meetings
 - a. Social
 - b. Evaluative
 - c. Open-ended
2. Student tutoring
3. Activity programming

But more importantly, they were taught how to approach their students in a positive philosophical and personal manner: they were taught to orient students toward success and to eschew failure. They were taught how to implement their beliefs. And of long lasting consequence - they learned to seek help from and give help to their colleagues, to and from parents, and to and from kids.

I, personally, spent a great deal of time sitting in on classes under the SWF concept. In my supervisory role, there was an ample opportunity to pick up and transfer ideas, activities and successful transactions from one school setting to another. It also gave me a chance to observe, first hand, the impact that the notion of "I can" can have when it catches hold in the lives of teachers and children in a school setting:

- truancy and vandalism diminished.
- disruption and disturbance diminished, and that which remained began to be viewed as a learning opportunity, not a threat.
- fighting diminished.
- grade failures diminished.
- passive human vegetables began to put out tentative feelers to a now safer psychological environment.
- and teachers began to dialogue with each other at first, then with kids, and then with parents.

In the middle of the semester after their training, an attitudinal survey was made using a thirty-one item, Likert-type, five-point (completely agree to completely disagree) scale - the instruction had the following characteristics:

1. Face validity (it seemed to assess attitude toward SWF)
2. .86 reliability (adequate for group use)
3. Standard Error of Measurement of 4.23
4. Standard Deviation of Scores - 11.58
5. Range of 84 to 153 with a mean of 113.59

Following rules of inferential logic based upon statistical manipulation of the data utilizing analysis of variance procedures, several conclusions were reached:

1. Teachers, having experienced training and applied SWF, are favorably disposed toward it.
2. SWF training and practices are perceived by teachers to:
 - a. Improve communication within schools and to the community.
 - b. Improve student attitudes.
3. Given favorable attitudes across the board:
 - a. Elementary-trained teachers were significantly more positive to SWF than were secondary-trained teachers in the sample.
 - b. Elementary teachers had significantly more favorable attitudes toward SWF than did middle school teachers.
 - c. There were no differences to be found in measured attitude by sex, number of credits past the bachelor's degree or years of teaching experience.

The study¹ is now being repeated on the most recent training cluster.

¹Kenneth Jensen, Donald Hafeman and Mary Ann Allen. Schools Without Failure: An Interim Report. Presented to the Madison Board of Education (Madison, The Public Schools, Mimeo) May, 1972.

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NOW WHAT

Finally, SWF can be reported to have brought about institutional change in that courses being taught on the University of Wisconsin campus are incorporating the ideas and materials of SWF. An on-campus course is being offered as well as a state-wide television network for extension credit.

Commitment to SWF in Madison remains high - in this case, familiarity has bred attempt, "What more could be fairer."

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Appendix

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Schools Without Failure

An Interim Report
Presented to:
The Madison Board of Education

A Teacher Attitude Survey

by

Kenneth Jensen, Director, Elementary Education
Donald Hafeman, Director, Secondary Education
Mary Ann Allen, Administrative Assistant to Director

May, 1972

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FOREWORD

The Schools Without Failure (SWF) concept has been operating in 24 Madison elementary and four middle schools for one and one-half school years. Basically, SWF is dedicated to making the schools psychologically safer for students.

In the winter of 1972, an attitudinal survey was undertaken to assess the views of teachers in participating schools toward the Schools Without Failure concept. This report presents the findings of that study:

1. Whole Questionnaire
2. Specific Items
3. Final Paper Report
4. Demographic Considerations
5. Conclusions and Implications.

I. The Whole Questionnaire

The SMF attitude instrument¹ consisted of thirty-one statements with which teachers could indicate their agreement or disagreement on a five point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. All responses were re-scaled so that a high score (5) would be favorable to SMF and a low score (1) would be negative toward SMF.

The mean of all items was 3.7 indicating a favorable attitude toward SMF. The average score for all respondents on all items was 113.6 out of a possible 155.

These two facts may be taken to indicate a generally favorable attitude toward Schools Without Failure among those Madison teachers responding to the survey (426 teachers in 28 schools).

¹The instrument had excellent test characteristics (reliability = .86, only one item not functioning.) It is reproduced in Appendix I.

II. Specific Items

Two kinds of items were isolated from the total test for extra scrutiny:

1. Those with great face validity (they seem to ask critical questions).
2. Those upon which teachers exhibited a consensus of positive or negative response.¹

Face Validity

It would seem important to ask teachers 1) how their school was doing in SWF (Items 5 and 9), 2) how students were doing in SWF (11 and 21), and 3) how teachers were doing in SWF (13 and 15). The mean response in these six items is 3.45 indicating a favorable attitude toward SWF on high face validity items.

Consensus Items

All items on which there was consensus were positive toward SWF:

- Items 1, 23 : SWF class meetings are profitable.
- Items 3, 12 : Behavior problems are decreasing due to SWF.
- Items 4, 8 : Student involvement is increasing due to SWF.
- Items 13, 30 : Teachers are comfortable in SWF.
- Item 7 : Student achievement is improving.
- Item 28 : Permissiveness is not exaggerated.
- Item 16 : It is important for students to feel free to question each other.

¹Consensus is attained when the mean response plus or minus one standard deviation does not cross the midpoint (3) on the scale.

The mean response on these eleven consensus items was 4.1 (out of 5) indicating a strong agreement (as well as consensus) on each of these items.

III. Final Paper Report¹

An interim evaluation committee consisting of Madison teachers and administrators reviewed 275 SWF papers (about ten from each school) produced by teachers. The papers were to be a statement of the teacher's feelings about SWF and the things that had happened to him/her as a result of participation.

The evaluation committee arrived at general agreement on several statements.

POSITIVE

1. SWF resulted in a more positive teacher attitude toward children.
2. SWF tended to increase staff communication within a school.
3. Parental involvement has increased under SWF.
4. Children tend to develop a more positive attitude toward school.
5. Children are more apt to adhere to rules they have helped make.
6. Class meetings (one of the techniques of SWF) are important for stimulating creative thinking.

SWF NEEDS

1. SWF must be modified at each building to be successful.
2. Program maintenance through new materials is required.
3. Leaders in SWF must be selected by the staff rather than by position in the school hierarchy.

¹The full report of the interim evaluation committee is available upon request to Dr. Hafeman or Mr. Jensen.

4. Reporting pupil progress to parents must be modified in SWF schools.
5. Without enthusiastic teachers, SWF cannot succeed.

SWF/NEGATIVE

1. Some teachers, basically at the Middle School level, feel that there is no need for SWF in Madison as pupils are sufficiently motivated.
2. Some teachers do not see a satisfactory reason for personal involvement with pupils as seems to be required by SWF.

IV. Demographic Considerations

Once data are available for a topic under scrutiny, it is frequently informative to pursue consideration of the results among the various sub-groups into which the data contributors can be divided. For example, since there are elementary schools and middle schools represented, teachers in which level of school have the better attitude toward SWF as measured by the attitude scale?

This was tested (using statistical procedures) with the result that elementary teachers (with a mean of 114.7) had significantly better measured attitudes than did middle school teachers (mean of 108.4).

Note that middle school teachers were favorably disposed toward SWF; this test revealed that elementary teachers were more favorably disposed.

Will elementary-trained teachers have a more favorably attitude than secondary-trained teachers? Yes. Teachers claiming secondary training had a mean of 108.3; elementary-trained teachers had a mean of 114.3.

Again, secondary-trained teachers were positive about SWF but not to the same extent as were elementary-trained teachers.

Will females have better measured attitudes than males? No. There is no significant difference between the scores of the two groups.

Will more experienced teachers resent SWF? No. There was no significant difference in attitude score attributable to experience either in favor of or against SWF. Again, the total group is favorably disposed toward SWF.

Is attitude toward SWF dependent upon whether the group was trained in the spring of 1971 or the fall of 1972? Surprisingly, yes. The fall group scored significantly higher than did the spring group. Again, both

groups had a positive attitude.

Would teachers with more credits beyond the bachelor's degree be more favorable toward SWF than teachers with less credits? No. There was no significant difference to be found here.

Is there a difference in attitude attributable to the area of the city in which the school is located? Here are the mean scores by high school census tract:

EAST	113.8
WEST	112.4
MEMORIAL	116.2
LA FOLLETTE	115.2

Again, the only difference to be found is the difference between favorable and slightly more favorable measured attitudes.

V. Conclusions and Implications

1. Teachers are generally favorably disposed toward the Schools Without Failure concept.
2. Schools Without Failure seems to be
 - a. Increasing within-school communication
 - b. Improving student attitudes
 - c. Improving school-community dialogue.
3. When the data showing a favorable attitude toward SWF are sifted:
 - a. Elementary-trained teachers are more positive than are secondary-trained.
 - b. Elementary teachers are more favorable toward SWF than are middle school teachers.
 - c. There is no difference in measured attitude according to sex, credits past the bachelor's degree, years of teaching experience.

More generally speaking, these data suggest that in-service training is a viable means for initiating, implementing, and maintaining broad-based change in the public school system.

From a personnel point of view, there is some support for the notion that if SWF represents the kind of program wanted at the middle school level, then elementary-trained rather than secondary-trained teachers might be better choices for employment at that level.

Finally, judging from teacher response, it seems that when a massive intervention in which a philosophy or a point of view such as SWF is articulated clearly to teachers, teachers can see the results of that intervention in their own behaviors, in the behavior of their students, in the behavior of their colleagues, and in the behavior of the parents of the students. This suggests that clear statements of the purpose and meaning of the schools along with support for the articulation of these goals in terms of program

would very likely result in school programming which moves toward achieving those expressed goals.

Appendix I

Items, Means and Standard Deviations

Note well

A high score expresses a positive attitude toward Schools Without Failure in all cases. Example:

6. Failure is a valuable learning experience. Mean 3.49 Disagree

This statement is antithetical to SWF philosophy. The high average response should be read to mean that teachers disagreed with this statement.

Means and Standard Deviations
Questionnaire Items

QUESTION	Standard		High Score
	Mean	Deviation	
1. My class meetings were usually profitable to me and my students.	3.83	.67	Agree
2. Competition between students for high grades is an important aspect of motivation.	3.72	.99	Disagree
3. There are more behavior problems in my classroom now than before I used the SWF techniques.	4.00	.79	Disagree
4. It is important to involve students in sharing decisions about their educational program.	4.19	.74	Agree
5. Our school has made progress toward becoming a SWF.	3.69	.79	Agree
6. Failure is a valuable learning experience.	3.49	1.09	Disagree
7. The achievement in my classroom has deteriorated since I have used SWF techniques.	4.12	.63	Disagree
8. The majority of students were involved in my classroom meetings.	3.92	.81	Agree
9. I do not feel our school will become a SWF.	3.60	.88	Disagree
10. Too much time was taken away from regular classroom work by conducting class meetings.	3.72	.98	Disagree
11. My students are experiencing more success in school as a result of using SWF techniques.	3.72	.76	Agree
12. I do not feel that students take advantage of me when I am friendly with them.	4.03	.85	Agree
13. I do not feel as comfortable in the classroom as I did before I used SWF techniques.	4.19	.71	Disagree

Appendix I continued

14.	I found that students could learn as much from each other as they could from me.	3.54	1.01	Agree
15.	I was successful in using the SWF techniques in my classroom.	3.58	.69	Agree
16.	It is important for children to recognize that they can question each other's opinions.	4.31	.56	Agree
17.	The trainers in my school did not do a good job in developing the total SWF program.	3.81	.85	Disagree
18.	I feel I should have the right not to get involved with some students.	3.75	1.03	Disagree
19.	I see just as much failure in the school as I did before we participated in the SWF program.	3.15	.87	Disagree
20.	It is more beneficial to the student to be in heterogeneous as opposed to homogeneous classes.	3.62	.88	Agree
21.	My students are doing better work than they did before I used SWF techniques.	2.93	.73	Agree
22.	Children at this grade level can think critically when involved in class meetings.	3.77	.898	Agree
23.	Most of my class meetings were not beneficial to my class.	3.81	.70	Disagree
24.	Schools Without Failure has helped my students understand that they must be accountable for their own behavior.	3.42	.84	Agree
25.	I have noticed a recent improvement in my students' behavior which I relate to SWF.	2.91	.85	Agree
26.	In order to Realize the Schools Without Failure Program, it has been necessary to change my methods of evaluating students.	3.16	1.07	Agree
27.	The trainers at my school were well prepared to develop the SWF program.	3.66	.89	Agree

Appendix 7 Continued

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Appendix I continued

28.	The Schools Without Failure Program encourages too much permissiveness in the classroom.	3.86	.84	Disagree
29.	I feel more at ease in my classroom now that I employ SWF techniques.	2.98	.92	Agree
30.	I was not able to use the SWF philosophy in my dealing with students.	4.03	.62	Disagree
31.	The SWF program has helped me communicate better with my colleagues.	3.43	.86	Agree